# ABORIGINAL BUSINESS: CELEBRATED IN ALBERTA

FEBRUARY 2010

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The Alberta Region of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is pleased to again be a sponsor of the Alberta Business Awards of Distinction. We are proud of all the finalists nominated for the Aboriginal Relations – Best Practice Award of Distinction (given to a non-Aboriginal business that demonstrates outstanding achievements in Aboriginal relations, including economic development, employment and training and Aboriginal community support) and the Eagle Feather Business Award of Distinction (given to an Aboriginal-owned business that demonstrates outstanding achievement in business while incorporating entrepreneurial and cultural concepts into its operations).

These companies, and the individuals that comprise them, have weathered many storms and are proof positive that businesses can continue to thrive and grow in an adverse economic period – all the while keeping to the principles and practices that make them the best of the best. Enjoy their success stories.

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THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION
Best Practice Award finalist

# CANADA SAFEWAY

## Continuous Improvement is the Goal

A finalist for the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Aboriginal Relations – Best Practice Award last year, Canada Safeway continues to be a model operation for its innovative Aboriginal relations efforts. No surprise then that the company has again been chosen as one of the four finalists in this category.

Introduced to Canada in 1929, Safeway has become the largest grocery retailer in Western Canada operating over 90 stores in Alberta alone. Canada Safeway has a long tradition of giving back, having invested in local communities through active support and generous donations that help sustain local food banks. The provision of financial support and food products to community organizations across the province has been a key part of the corporate culture since inception. Hunger prevention, nutrition education and outreach and cancer research initiatives have all benefited from the company's community efforts.

*Order selector Royce Provost at Canada Safeway's StorCare Warehouse*

In recent years, Canada Safeway has redoubled its efforts to strengthen relations with Aboriginal peoples.

Economic development projects undertaken in conjunction with Aboriginal communities and groups are lasting commitments. Foremost among these are the 2008 Aboriginal work partnership initiative inked with the federal government, recommendations stemming from the human resource development agreement in partnership with the federal government, the 2008 memorandum of understanding with Oteenow Employment and Training Society, and the 2006 Alberta workforce Connex forum that explored ways to improve Aboriginal workforce access and integration. All continue to provide mechanisms that enhance opportunities within Canada Safeway through the active involvement of communities, Aboriginal organizations and various levels of government.

*Meat cutter Henry Chief at the Northgate Safeway in Edmonton*

The company has also been involved in large-scale community events and partnerships with educational institutions. Canada Safeway has participated extensively in Southern Alberta Institute of Technology's Aboriginal symposium, cultural lecture series and powwows for a number of years, donating food and volunteers.

First time initiatives in 2009 were many and varied:

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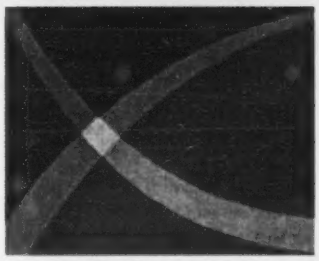

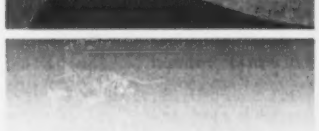

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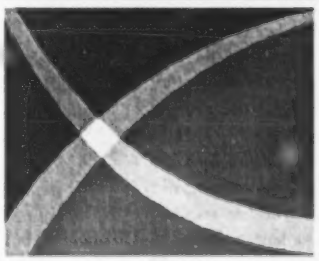

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada | Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada

Canada

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- A partnership with Oteenow and the provincial government trained eight Aboriginal students for a month in the company's meat cutter training program.
- The company's longstanding partnership with Aboriginal Futures and Alberta Employment and Immigration trained 10 participants in stores and warehousing.
- The community futures Treaty 7 partnership saw Canada Safeway sponsor and be actively involved in planning for the Treaty 7 disability conference, along with presenting at the multi stakeholder training session workshops held in Lethbridge.
- The company hosted Aboriginal job fairs throughout the year around the province.

New programs are being developed regularly, all in keeping with the company's desire for continuous improvement. Year end 2009 recorded over 850 persons self-identified as Aboriginal working at Canada Safeway's numerous facilities and distribution centres across Alberta.

Continued support for and meaningful integration with a number of organizations is ongoing. Groups like the Calgary urban Aboriginal initiative, the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, the Enoch Cree Nation, the Medicine Hat Aboriginals with disabilities training program – among many others – can all attest to the way Canada Safeway and its employees conduct themselves in the context of positive and progressive Aboriginal relations. The company would have it no other way.

SAFEWAY.

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THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION
Best Practice Award finalist

# DEVON CANADA

## Improving on a Special Relationship

**It doesn't happen often. Only three times – the last over 15 years ago – have the Kehewin Cree acknowledged an individual as an honorary chief. That is what Greg Brady, Devon Canada's Aboriginal Relations Manager, received last summer. He was given the Cree name Wapis'kaw ayapit – Sits on White Cloud – during a special sacred pipe ceremony at Kehewin's 25th anniversary powwow near Bonnyville. The honour recognizes the efforts made toward creating a positive, mutually beneficial relationship between them.**

"This has a particular resonance for me," said Brady. "It is uniquely significant, deeply felt and greatly appreciated. It represents the respect and understanding we've achieved together."

Devon's relationship with Kehewin Cree Nation is based on complementary goals and a long-term commitment. Historically the Kehewin have struggled with high unemployment in their community despite significant oil and gas activities taking place on their traditional lands. In early 2008, the band council approached Devon and requested they work cooperatively on an economic development initiative. Kehewin and Devon negotiated and signed an agreement that established and defined the details of how the overall relationship and economic initiative would work.

*Devon staff at one of their many partnership rig sites*

On behalf of Kehewin, Devon applied for and secured a $100,000 Strategic Economic Initiative (SEI) grant from the provincial government. At the same time, Kehewin incorporated a band owned and operated lease construction business called Kehewin Cree Nation Contracting Ltd. (KCNC). Devon committed 3,000 hours of work for KCNC in Devon's Iron River operational area. Kehewin also applied for and received a grant from Alberta Employment and Immigration to train community members to operate the equipment required for lease construction work.

Kehewin and Devon collaborated throughout 2009. Although the SEI grant officially expired at the end of the year, Devon continues to supply advice and expertise on business management and strategic business planning. Ideally, as KCNC's business grows, Devon will be one of a number of clients; albeit one that has deep roots.

Devon's partnership with Kehewin Cree Nation is an example of the company's larger commitment to developing best practices in Aboriginal relations. Devon has developed a comprehensive Aboriginal relations program, with a mandate to establish, maintain and develop respectful and mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal communities affected by the company's activities. Toward this goal, the department facilitates the implementation of Devon's Aboriginal relations policy (established in 2004) within company operations and regularly offers Aboriginal awareness training and education programs that are available to all employees.

*Honorary Chief Greg Brady and KCN Chief Ernest Gadwa*

Devon has concentrated efforts on employment and training initiatives that impart Aboriginal people with meaningful guidance to prepare them for long-term careers. Examples of training and employment initiatives include a job shadow program for Aboriginal high school students with the city of Grande Prairie and several other business partners in the area; the Jackfish fourth class power engineering training program at its steam assisted gravity drainage facility south of Fort McMurray; the highly successful trades in motion program; and the Alberta future leaders program.

Devon also provides a $4,000 bursary to a worthy northeast student in third or fourth year power engineering at Portage College, and has budgeted for seven Aboriginal trainee positions as part of the Aboriginal career pathways field operator training program set to begin this year.

Add in a multitude of contributions through its community investment program – from play equipment purchase to cultural events to elder/youth workshops – and it's obvious Devon Canada puts its core value of "being a good neighbour" into action when it comes to Aboriginal relations and best practices.

devon

THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION
Best Practice Award finalist

# SYNCRUDE CANADA

## In Depth Involvement, Since the Beginning

If you were to ask the average person in Alberta what is Syncrude, the oil sands project would undoubtedly come to mind. The company is among the world's largest producers of synthetic crude from oil sands and is the largest single source producer in the country. A joint venture of seven partners, Syncrude has a daily production capacity of 350,000 barrels with proven reserves in the billions.

While Syncrude is vastly known for its involvement in the oil sands, it is also becoming acknowledged as one of the largest employers of Aboriginal people in Canada. Syncrude's success in this area is attributed to its top notch Aboriginal Development program, which has made the company one of only 11 in Canada to achieve gold level accreditation in the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business' Progressive Aboriginal Relations program.

"Our investment and commitment in the people and communities here is not just the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do," said President and Chief Executive Officer Tom Katinas. "Thirty five years ago and four years before production started, our president pledged that First Nations and Métis in the northeast would benefit from the development of the region's oil sands deposits. We have a long history of positive relationships built on respect. Those bonds promote employment and revenue generation with our Aboriginal partner companies. Since 1992, we've spent more than $1.4 billion on goods and services, over $140 million in 2009 alone. Working together is how we'll succeed together."

Currently Syncrude has contracts with over 30 Aboriginal-owned businesses, including four of the five First Nations in the Wood Buffalo region. It is a company that remains tireless in its efforts to involve, promote and share successes with its Aboriginal partners.

Nearly 500 employees have self-identified as Aboriginal, with 87 of those having been hired last year alone. The company is dedicated to creating employment opportunities that will enable Aboriginal peoples to participate fully at every level of the company. Currently just over five per cent of management is staffed by persons of Aboriginal descent and Syncrude expects that number to continue to increase.

The company operates a unique rotational employment program for residents of Fort Chipewyan, Javier and Conklin. Fourteen employees

*Participants in the annual Fort Chipewyan ice fishing derby*

*Environmental technician checking peat moss density*

fly in weekly from Fort Chipewyan while four from Javier and Conklin participate in the drive-in program. The company provides accommodation for the week and ground/air transportation to and from their home communities.

Training future employees is as important as nurturing current ones. Almost half of a $5 million donation to Keyano College will go to the Syncrude Aboriginal trades preparation program. Successful graduates are guaranteed employment with the company. Summer employment programs are also strongly supported within local communities, as are placement programs for newly graduated teachers.

Community support initiatives are myriad. Highlights of the nearly $6 million – a record amount – Syncrude invested directly in Aboriginal communities in 2008 included multiple scholarships for post-secondary education, a youth centre and upgrades worth half a million dollars to the arena in Fort Chipewyan, and sponsorship of the Athabasca Tribal council's youth entrepreneur program.

Cultural events, food bank drives and a multitude of charitable causes, including $1.3 million contributed by the company and its employees to the Wood Buffalo United Way campaign also received company support.

Syncrude's association with the oil sands is clear. And now thanks to increased recognition, Syncrude is quickly becoming synonymous with being a leader in Aboriginal relations.

Syncrude

THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION
Best Practice Award finalist

# SAVANNA ENERGY

## Partnerships are Proven Winners

Despite having a continental reputation for state-of-the-art equipment and top notch efficiency, Savanna Energy employees are most proud of their partnerships with First Nations throughout Alberta. The 50/50 partnerships are a feather in the cap for the Canadian-based drilling and well servicing company, an innovative approach it continues to expand on.

Courtesy of Savanna Energy

*Trainees performing their fall protection certification at Buffalo Narrows*

"We are known in the business as the Aboriginal drilling company," said Chief Executive Officer Ken Mullen with a smile, "even though we employ upwards of 2,600 people of all nationalities. Our partnerships are a big reason for the reputation, even though we've got operations all across Western Canada, the United States, Mexico and now Australia."

What began as a partnership with the Dene Tha' First Nation in 2001 has grown into partnerships with eight additional Aboriginal communities from all Alberta treaty areas. Within these relationships, Savanna Energy's role is to arrange financing, coordinate rig construction and commissioning, organize drilling contracts across the industry and carry out daily operations, while using employees from the First Nation partner wherever possible.

By providing unsecured loans, partnering First Nations become equity partners reaping the benefits of tangible ownership and the attendant financial returns, along with increased employment and training. They have the capacity to strengthen their position within the industry through expansion or, as one partner has done, sell a number of rigs back to Savanna and become a shareholder in the company.

One of the key successes to the joint ventures has been the early creation of positions specific to relationship building and partnership development staffed by Aboriginal persons. Ongoing communications and regular quarterly meetings ensure that both sides are completely open and transparent, working collectively to ensure positive outcomes. Frequent rig tours facilitated by the partners' development staff give elders, youth, community and council members, and Savanna management the chance to see their collective investment in operation.

Savanna Energy places a major emphasis on training through an ongoing week-long intensive training program that is aimed specifically at Aboriginal workers. Combining classroom learning – three days, including pre-screening, employment readiness and health, safety and environmental learning, and two days intensive hands-on experience – the intent is to develop future employees from the partner communities. Formal career development certificate and diploma programs together with comprehensive informal company-sponsored career development courses aid employee retention and empower self-improvement.

The company is active and supportive in educational initiatives at the secondary and post-secondary levels through bursaries and awards. Through the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, Savanna Energy awards three-year bursaries to students of Aboriginal ancestry who complete their first year of the petroleum engineering technology program.

*A partnership tour with members from Saddle Lake Cree Nation*

The company has also matched a $10,000 personal contribution by Savanna Energy Director Kevin Nugent for Aboriginal programming initiatives at the University of Lethbridge.

Corporately Savanna Energy supports a host of charitable causes throughout the province. This is bolstered by active employee participation and extensive funding for community, provincial and national organizations across the company's area of operations.

As one partner recently put it: "The services Savanna Energy has provided to our nation are tremendous...it has proven to be a company of honour and dignity." It is an eloquent summation.

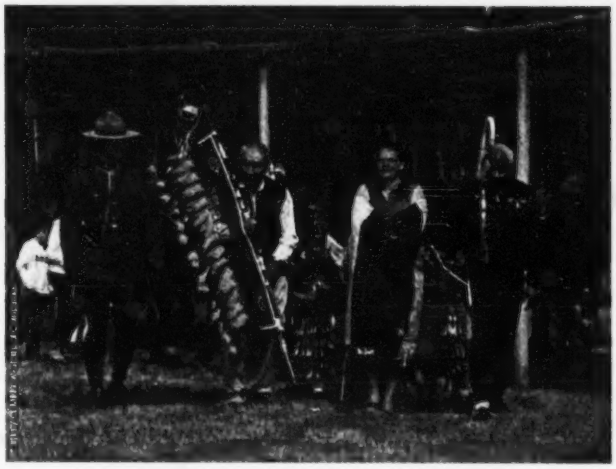
Savanna Energy Services Corp

THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION
Eagle Feather Award finalist

# MIKISEW GROUP OF COMPANIES

## Pride of a Nation

In Cree, Mikisew means Eagle. The 2,500 members – residing on their traditional land around Fort Chipewyan and throughout Alberta – possess many of the eagle's characteristics, namely pride and resourcefulness. The Mikisew Group of Companies (MGOC), the business entity that drives economic development and self-reliance, has adopted a philosophy reflective of this. It's called "Pride of a Nation."



*Procession at the annual Mikisew Days celebration in June*

"Pride of a Nation is much more than an exercise in branding," explains MGOC Chief Executive Officer Dale Monaghan. "It transcends every aspect of our operations. It is the overarching purpose and vision of every single employee – to excel, and in doing so, support our elders, all community members and future generations of Mikisew."

Those operations are something to be proud of. The umbrella group includes aviation services (Air Mikisew), manufacturing (Mikisew Industrial), hospitality and recreation (ownership of a Super 8 Hotel and Mikisew Sport Fishing), real estate (Mikisew Property Development), bulk fuel (Fort Petroleum) and automotive and heavy equipment maintenance (Mikisew Fleet Maintenance).

The flagship of this diverse and growing group of businesses is Mikisew Energy. Founded in 1992, it is an established ISO certified company and a major participant in the resource development sector in the Wood Buffalo region. Working for the oil and gas, mining and forestry industries, Mikisew Energy provides a spectrum of maintenance related services, catering primarily to the needs of large-scale industrial clients. The company also supplies labor, project management, material handling, environmental and safety services, and plant and mine site maintenance, among others.

All services are delivered with pride of workmanship and quality of service in keeping with the company's *raison d'être*. Consequently, Mikisew Energy has recently exceeded two million man hours without an accident, and been recognized with the Alberta Labour Ministry's award for safety excellence three years running.

Other member companies have also been acknowledged for their accomplishments. Multiple nominations for excellence in customer service through the local tourism association's gold star program are the norm for MGOC. Their hotel won the Alberta hotel association hospitality award last year and the management company, Pacrim Hospitality Services, was Hotelier Magazine's company of the year in 2008.

Mikisew Sport Fishing was the recipient of the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce environmental stewardship award for efforts at greening its operations and camps scattered across 10 northern lakes, through solar panel installations and other innovative measures. Manager Tim Gilles was honoured as Fort McMurray Tourism's "Ambassador of the Year" in 2009.

While the recognition of the many business associations MGOC is affiliated with is rewarding, more important to the management team and the nearly 400 employees are their efforts for and with the community at large. MGDC sponsors and actively participates in a large number of social/charitable events and programs. They give back to their people through Treaty days, the Elder culture camp, the regional Aboriginal recognition awards, blueberry days and the Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage, to name a few.

In the larger community they support the Keyano College Foundation, the Northern Lights Hospital Foundation and the Centre of Hope, along with a score of others. All of it stems from a sense of connectivity and pride in their success. Their growth is spurred by the need to excel and improve themselves collectively – as one nation.

*Having fun under the tent at Mikisew Days*

MIKISEW
GROUP OF COMPANIES

THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION
Eagle Feather Award finalist

# SEVEN LAKES OILFIELD SERVICES Continuing to Grow in the Northeast

When Seven Lakes Oilfield Services was a finalist for the Eagle Feather Award three years ago, the company had 23 employees and a primary focus on waste removal. The company now employs 60 and has expanded its business operations considerably. Those employees bring experience and maturation to a host of projects in the oilfield labour and services market in the northeast corner of the province where the company is based.

Seven Lakes is owned collectively by the First Nations of Cold Lake, Frog Lake, Kehewin, Saddle Lake, Heart Lake, Beaver Lake and Goodfish Lake, with a business strategy guided by three core principles: a focus on expansion of operations; an emphasis on hiring locally within the First Nations; and a commitment to provide competitive pricing and quality service to its customers. In each of these areas Seven Lakes has found success.

*Staff working at one of the many sites they service*

From its inception in 2002 with a single front load waste disposal truck to a current fleet of over 30 vehicles and equipment, Seven Lakes continues to expand and prosper.

The waste management division has four tandem roll-off trucks capable of hauling 20 to 30-yard bins, a front loader truck and two roll-off trailers. As its client base continues to grow, Seven Lakes is in the process of purchasing more roll-off trucks and trailers, as well as specialized dumping units.

Seven Lakes provides environmental remediation crews along with wellhead and small spill remedial programs throughout Northeast Alberta. It also provides recycling programs, pipeline surveillance, snow removal, laser tag sampling services and offers lease road sanding as well as a wellhead gas testing service.

Another expansion of the business is the scaffolding division, currently with one of the largest equipment inventories in the Lakeland region. The company's quality assurance and quality control programs and certification through training provided by the Scaffolding Industry Association are key aspects that ensure superior products and first rate service by qualified personnel.

One of the most important elements of Seven Lakes operations is a commitment to professionalism in all the jobs they do. Drawing from a potential labour pool of nearly 12,000 First Nations persons, Seven Lakes sets high standards for employment with a focus on local hires. Seven Lakes provides entry-level jobs, giving new recruits the chance to gain valuable experience within the oil industry. Presently 78 per cent of the workforce is Aboriginal, as are the majority of management positions.

A strong emphasis is placed on a working environment that is healthy and safe. The company has adopted the motto "Safety is our tradition," reflecting a goal of zero injuries, zero incidents and no work hours lost. This target is reinforced by continual upgrading of skill levels and ongoing training that stresses the importance of safe actions both on and off the job for every employee. This strategy has paid off in spades; the company won the 2008 best safety performer award from Work Safe Alberta.

*One of the company's sanding trucks*

As Business Manager Greg Stene points out, the company's philosophy is all-encompassing. "Seven Lakes will continue with sustained growth in the future. Our dedicated employees with their top-notch safety culture will enable us to keep growing and providing opportunities for other members of our seven First Nations."

The continued growth of Seven Lakes Oilfield Services just goes to show the practices they preach are working just fine.

Seven Lakes Oilfield Services

THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION
Eagle Feather Award finalist

# MXC RACING AND OFF ROAD

## On the Road to Success

Sometimes it isn't about how good your employees are. Sometimes it's about the customers that are like employees, ready to help out at a moment's notice. It's because they want to. And it's because they care. That partially explains Adam and Colleen Tatum's business – that and a shared thirst for outdoor adventure and great machinery. It's a lifestyle they relish, and they've created a business that builds on that foundation.

The couple purchased MXC Racing and Off Road in 2004, based on an enjoyment for getting out into the wilderness every way possible. A love of machines became a business that keeps growing, attracting clients who are friends and colleagues first and foremost.

"We take care of our customers because they tend to be acquaintances and fellow power sport enthusiasts usually," said Adam. "We enjoy the camaraderie of course, but we're also a service and specialty shop that is first-rate. We keep expanding to meet our customers' needs. That's what a successful business is all about, keeping your customers happy."

*Entrants in the MXC-sponsored charity 'mud bog'*

The company has found an excellent niche market and is doing everything required to ensure business remains strong. Since opening its doors, MXC has doubled its staff and considerably expanded its space to carry a wide range of outdoor-oriented accessories, parts and gear for trucks, ATVs, bikes and sleds, along with hunting and other recreational products. The company also offers customizing and repair work on trucks and other vehicles, and specializes in lift kits, special tires, wheels and superchargers.

"If you like to work hard and play hard in Alberta's great outdoors, there's a good chance we've got it in stock or can get it for you quickly." said Colleen. "MXC strives to provide not just a store, but a place that generates community pride. The activities of our customers promote healthy lifestyles, and that generates pride in our community and the natural surroundings all of us enjoy."

And community is very important. MXC is an active and enthusiastic member of the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce and recently the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association (NAABA). The not-for-profit association is committed to enhancing and creating an environment that promotes businesses, jobs, and training for the betterment of all Aboriginal people in the region. MXC joined to further business-to-business opportunities with other Aboriginal-owned businesses, and for the networking and resources the association promotes.

*Owner Adam Tatum at work*

The company supports a number of sports teams as well as local social groups, food banks and meal providers, and donates to and assists the local SPCA, the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre Foundation, and the Centre of Hope, a shelter for the homeless.

"We feel fortunate with what we've built up business-wise," said Adam, gesturing around the store. "We've got loyal customers and we're grateful for them and the community as a whole. Giving back to better where we live and work and play is a no-brainer."

It's clear generosity and community involvement come naturally to MXC's owners. The community is understandably appreciative as are the area power sport fans—for the service, selection and, most of all, the fellowship at the MXC shop on Franklin Avenue.

## Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO)

CANDO's vision is to build capacity which strengthens Aboriginal economies by providing programs and services to economic development officers. The Council's mission is to be the leading authority on Aboriginal community economic development.

Entering its 20th year, the organization has over 450 members in every province and territory in Canada. Over the next three years CANDO will focus on organizational growth, communications and sustainability in keeping with its mandate to improve Aboriginal economic development.

With the national office and nearly one-fifth of the country's economic development officers located in Alberta, CANDO has an obvious presence in the province. The Council continues to be the voice for officers in furthering the work they do, for and with band councils, Aboriginal economic development agencies and various levels of government.

Again this year CANDO has coordinated the nomination and finalist selection process for the two Alberta Business Awards of Distinction sponsored by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada: the *Aboriginal Relations-Best Practice Award of Distinction and the Eagle Feather Business Award of Distinction.*

CANDO | Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers

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Another expansion of the business is the scaffolding division, currently with one of the largest equipment inventories in the Lakeland region. The company's quality assurance and quality control programs and certification through training provided by the Scaffolding Industry Association are key aspects that ensure superior products and first rate service by qualified personnel.

One of the most important elements of Seven Lakes operations is a commitment to professionalism in all the jobs they do. Drawing from a potential labour pool of nearly 12,000 First Nations persons, Seven Lakes sets high standards for employment with a focus on local hires. Seven Lakes provides entry-level jobs, giving new recruits the chance to gain valuable experience within the oil industry. Presently 78 per cent of the workforce is Aboriginal, as are the majority of management positions.

A strong emphasis is placed on a working environment that is healthy and safe. The company has adopted the motto "Safety is our tradition," reflecting a goal of zero injuries, zero incidents and no work hours lost. This target is reinforced by continual upgrading of skill levels and ongoing training that stresses the importance of safe actions both on and off the job for every employee. This strategy has paid off in spades; the company won the 2008 best safety performer award from Work Safe Alberta.

*One of the company's sanding trucks*

As Business Manager Greg Stene points out, the company's philosophy is all-encompassing. "Seven Lakes will continue with sustained growth in the future. Our dedicated employees with their top-notch safety culture will enable us to keep growing and providing opportunities for other members of our seven First Nations."

The continued growth of Seven Lakes Oilfield Services just goes to show the practices they preach are working just fine.

Seven Lakes Oilfield Services

THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION
Eagle Feather Award finalist

# MXC RACING AND OFF ROAD

## On the Road to Success

Sometimes it isn't about how good your employees are. Sometimes it's about the customers that are like employees, ready to help out at a moment's notice. It's because they want to. And it's because they care. That partially explains Adam and Colleen Tatum's business – that and a shared thirst for outdoor adventure and great machinery. It's a lifestyle they relish, and they've created a business that builds on that foundation.

The couple purchased MXC Racing and Off Road in 2004, based on an enjoyment for getting out into the wilderness every way possible. A love of machines became a business that keeps growing, attracting clients who are friends and colleagues first and foremost.

"We take care of our customers because they tend to be acquaintances and fellow power sport enthusiasts usually," said Adam. "We enjoy the camaraderie of course, but we're also a service and specialty shop that is first-rate. We keep expanding to meet our customers' needs. That's what a successful business is all about, keeping your customers happy."

*Entrants in the MXC-sponsored charity 'mud bog'*

The company has found an excellent niche market and is doing everything required to ensure business remains strong. Since opening its doors, MXC has doubled its staff and considerably expanded its space to carry a wide range of outdoor-oriented accessories, parts and gear for trucks, ATVs, bikes and sleds, along with hunting and other recreational products. The company also offers customizing and repair work on trucks and other vehicles, and specializes in lift kits, special tires, wheels and superchargers.

"If you like to work hard and play hard in Alberta's great outdoors, there's a good chance we've got it in stock or can get it for you quickly." said Colleen. "MXC strives to provide not just a store, but a place that generates community pride. The activities of our customers promote healthy lifestyles, and that generates pride in our community and the natural surroundings all of us enjoy."

And community is very important. MXC is an active and enthusiastic member of the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce and recently the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association (NAABA). The not-for-profit association is committed to enhancing and creating an environment that promotes businesses, jobs, and training for the betterment of all Aboriginal people in the region. MXC joined to further business-to-business opportunities with other Aboriginal-owned businesses, and for the networking and resources the association promotes.

*Owner Adam Tatum at work*

The company supports a number of sports teams as well as local social groups, food banks and meal providers, and donates to and assists the local SPCA, the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre Foundation, and the Centre of Hope, a shelter for the homeless.

"We feel fortunate with what we've built up business-wise," said Adam, gesturing around the store. "We've got loyal customers and we're grateful for them and the community as a whole. Giving back to better where we live and work and play is a no-brainer."

It's clear generosity and community involvement come naturally to MXC's owners. The community is understandably appreciative as are the area power sport fans—for the service, selection and, most of all, the fellowship at the MXC shop on Franklin Avenue.

## Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO)

CANDO's vision is to build capacity which strengthens Aboriginal economies by providing programs and services to economic development office s. The Council's mission is to be the leading authority on Aboriginal community economic development.

Entering its 20th year, the organization has over 450 members in every province and territory in Canada. Over the next three years CANDO will focus on organizational growth, communications and sustainability in keeping with its mandate to improve Aboriginal economic development.

With the national office and nearly one-fifth of the country's economic development officers located in Alberta, CANDO has an obvious presence in the province. The Council continues to be the voice for officers in furthering the work they do, for and with band councils, Aboriginal economic development agencies and various levels of government.

Again this year CANDO has coordinated the nomination and finalist selection process for the two Alberta Business Awards of Distinction sponsored by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada: the *Aboriginal Relations-Best Practice Award of Distinction and the Eagle Feather Business Award of Distinction.*

CANDO | Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers

THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION
Eagle Feather Award finalist

# ACFN BUSINESS GROUP

## Strength Gained Through Diversification

The ACFN Business Group encompasses a number of wholly owned companies and joint ventures that represent the historic entrepreneurial spirit of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and its people. In addition to greatly increasing employment opportunities and generating income, the Business Group's success is a major source of pride for both band members and employees.

*Worker at Tech Sonic Services, part of the ACFN Business Group*

The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation lands are located on the southwest shore of Lake Athabasca. The Business Group, headquartered in Fort McMurray, is comprised of four entities 100 per cent owned by the First Nation and seven other businesses in which the First Nation has established controlling interests. The operations are varied: they include janitorial services, waste management, metal fabrication, manufacturing, civil engineering and construction services and tire recycling.

The ACFN Business Group has developed long-term contracts with all of the major players in the oil sands industry around Fort McMurray and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo – an area over 63,000 square kilometres. The client list includes, but is not limited to, Syncrude (a finalist for the Aboriginal Relations – Best Practice Award of Distinction this year), Suncor Energy, Shell and Canadian Natural Resources Ltd.

With over 700 people directly employed by the core companies within the Business Group and another 400 working for its joint venture companies, the ACFN Business Group is a major economic force in the Wood Buffalo region. Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Gary Flett has even grander aspirations down the road.

"Our employees are our most valuable asset and their commitment and dedication is evident through the execution of their duties. Previously, we had limited our expansion within the geographic boundaries of the Wood Buffalo region. We are now in a position to expand beyond regional, provincial and national boundaries. Of course, our growth will be done strategically. It will always maintain a focus on economic stability while exploring sound business opportunities."

Already some of the ACFN Business Group companies are attracting attention and clientele from further afield. Chip Manufacturing operates the northernmost manufacturing facility in Alberta, producing Kevlar® wristolets. This product has numerous industrial applications, providing protection that is 20 times stronger than steel, is fire retardant and puncture/slash resistant.

Tech Sonic Services is another example. This company provides on-site heavy contaminant removal solutions using patented ultrasonic technologies. These leading industrial-scale solutions use some of the largest engineered vessels in the world.

*Denesoline Environment, Janitorial Division staff with floor polisher*

Targeting the oil sands production sites along with all process plants and refineries, the company's technologies convert electrical energy to mechanical energy using patented ceramic transducers. These vibrate creating negative and positive pressure waves and ultimately intense pressure and heat (PSI and temperatures of 10,000 plus). This removes heavy contaminants from key process components, returning them to operation in like-new condition using a fraction of the time required by conventional cleaning.

The ACFN Business Group's diversity of products and services combined with its strong management team has allowed the Group to excel, even during the economic downturn. The long-term growth of its operations and markets is assured, providing a bold vision for corporate partners, employees and the nation the ACFN Business Group represents.

ACFN Business Group

Please address all letters, comments and requests to:

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Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
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630 Canada Place
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